

Washington State Auditor's Office

Audit Report

Audit Services

Report No. 57732

CITY OF MOUNT VERNON

Skagit County, Washington

January 1, 1995 Through December 31, 1995

Issue Date: September 20, 1996

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CITY OF MOUNT VERNON
Skagit County, Washington
January 1, 1995 Through December 31, 1995

**Independent Auditor's Report On Compliance With Laws And Regulations
At The Financial Statement Level (Plus Additional State Compliance
Requirements Per RCW 43.09.260)**

Mayor
City of Mount Vernon
Mount Vernon, Washington

We have audited the general-purpose financial statements, as listed in the table of contents, of the City of Mount Vernon, Skagit County, Washington, as of and for the fiscal year ended December 31, 1995, and have issued our report thereon dated May 3, 1996.

We conducted our audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement.

Compliance with laws, regulations, contracts, and grants applicable to the City of Mount Vernon is the responsibility of the city's management. As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement, we performed tests of the city's compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grants.

We also performed additional tests of compliance with state laws and regulations as required by *Revised Code of Washington* (RCW) 43.09.260. This statute requires the State Auditor to inquire as to whether the city complied with the laws and the *Constitution of the State of Washington*, its own ordinances and orders, and the requirements of the State Auditor's Office. Our responsibility is to examine, on a test basis, evidence about the city's compliance with those requirements and to make a reasonable effort to identify any instances of misfeasance, malfeasance, or nonfeasance in office on the part of any public officer or employee and to report any such instance to the management of the city and to the Attorney General. However, the objective of our audit of the financial statements was not to provide an opinion on overall compliance with these provisions. Accordingly, we do not express such an opinion.

The results of our tests disclosed no instances of material noncompliance that are required to be reported herein under *Government Auditing Standards*. However, we noted an instance of noncompliance immaterial to the financial statements which is identified in the Schedule of Findings accompanying this report.

This report is intended for the information of management and the mayor and to meet our statutory reporting obligations. This report is a matter of public record and its distribution is not limited. It also serves to disseminate information to the public as a reporting tool to help citizens assess government operations.

Brian Sonntag
State Auditor

May 3, 1996

CITY OF MOUNT VERNON
Skagit County, Washington
January 1, 1995 Through December 31, 1995

Independent Auditor's Report On Internal Control Structure
At The Financial Statement Level

Mayor
City of Mount Vernon
Mount Vernon, Washington

We have audited the general-purpose financial statements of the City of Mount Vernon, Skagit County, Washington, as of and for the fiscal year ended December 31, 1995, and have issued our report thereon dated May 3, 1996.

We conducted our audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement.

The management of the city is responsible for establishing and maintaining an internal control structure. In fulfilling this responsibility, estimates and judgments by management are required to assess the expected benefits and related costs of internal control structure policies and procedures. The objectives of an internal control structure are to provide management with reasonable, but not absolute, assurance that assets are safeguarded against loss from unauthorized use or disposition, and that transactions are executed in accordance with management's authorization and recorded properly to permit the preparation of financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. Because of inherent limitations in any internal control structure, errors or irregularities may nevertheless occur and not be detected. Also, projection of any evaluation of the structure to future periods is subject to the risk that procedures may become inadequate because of changes in conditions or that the effectiveness of the design and operation of policies and procedures may deteriorate.

In planning and performing our audit of the financial statements of the city, we obtained an understanding of the internal control structure. With respect to the internal control structure, we obtained an understanding of the design of relevant policies and procedures and whether they have been placed in operation, and we assessed control risk in order to determine our auditing procedures for the purpose of expressing our opinion on the financial statements and not to provide an opinion on the internal control structure. Accordingly, we do not express such an opinion.

Our consideration of the internal control structure would not necessarily disclose all matters in the internal control structure that might be reportable conditions and, accordingly, would not necessarily disclose all reportable conditions that are also considered to be material weaknesses. Reportable conditions involve matters coming to our attention relating to significant deficiencies in the design or operation of the internal control structure that, in our judgment, could adversely affect the entity's ability to record, process, summarize, and report financial data consistent with the assertions of management in the financial statements. A material weakness is a reportable condition in which the design or operation of one or more of the specific internal control structure elements does not reduce to a relatively low level the risk

that errors or irregularities in amounts that would be material in relation to the financial statements being audited may occur and not be detected within a timely period by employees in the normal course of performing their assigned functions. We noted no matters involving the internal control structure and its operations that we consider to be material weaknesses as defined above.

This report is intended for the information of management and the mayor and to meet our statutory reporting obligations. This report is a matter of public record and its distribution is not limited. It also serves to disseminate information to the public as a reporting tool to help citizens assess government operations.

Brian Sonntag
State Auditor

May 3, 1996

CITY OF MOUNT VERNON
Skagit County, Washington
January 1, 1995 Through December 31, 1995

Schedule Of Findings

1. The City Should Pursue Delinquent LID Assessments As Required By Law

Our review of Local Improvement District (LID) receivables revealed numerous delinquent accounts.

LID No. 1 had a total receivable of \$8,385 at year end with \$7,941 owed by one property owner. This property had made only one partial payment since 1988. The city has regularly billed the property owner and occasionally sent letters encouraging payment. However, foreclosure proceedings have not begun.

LID No. 2 had total receivable of \$6,354 at year end with \$4,961 owed by one property owner. This property had made no payments since 1990. Again, the city has regularly billed the property owner and occasionally sent letters encouraging payment, but foreclosure proceedings have not begun.

The city is required by law to pursue collection by foreclosure proceedings as noted in the following RCW.

RCW 35.50.030 states in part:

If on the first day of January in any year, two installments of any local improvement assessment are delinquent, or if the final installment thereof has been delinquent for more than one year, the city or town shall proceed with the foreclosure of the delinquent assessment or delinquent installments thereof

The proceedings shall be commenced on or before March 1st of that year . . . but not before the city or town treasurer has notified by certified mail the persons whose names appear on the assessment roll as owners of the property . . . a notice thirty days before the commencement of the proceedings.

RCW 35.50.050 states:

An action to collect a local improvement assessment or any installment thereof or to enforce the lien thereof whether brought by the city or town, or by any person having the right to bring such action must be commenced within ten years after the assessment becomes delinquent or within ten years after the last installment becomes delinquent, if the assessment is payable in installments: **PROVIDED**, That the time during which payment of principal is deferred as to economically disadvantaged property owners as provided

for in RCW 35.43.250 shall not be a part of the time limited for the commencement of action.

In addition to violating the above noted RCWs, the lack of collection of past due accounts has put an inequitable burden upon the remaining owners within the local improvement district.

The city did not feel it was cost effective to begin foreclosure proceedings against delinquent property owners since no account was so stale as to be at risk for collectability.

We recommend the city comply with applicable statutes as follows:

- a. Immediately mail certified letters notifying the property owner of the foreclosure proceedings.
- b. File appropriate foreclosure documents in the Skagit County Superior Court within 30 days of the certified notice if the property owner does not respond with full payment.

Auditee's Response

Due to a heavy workload in the City Attorney's office and the feeling that collectability was not at risk, statutory collection procedures for delinquent LID Assessments were not followed. Therefore, we have to concur with your finding regarding the City's inadequate pursuit of delinquent LID assessments. The City Attorney is now utilizing legal interns to mail certified letters notifying delinquent property owners of our intent to begin foreclosure proceedings. In addition, we will file the appropriate foreclosure documents in the Skagit County Superior Court within 30 days of the certified notice if the property owner does not respond with full payment.

Collection procedures are now being implemented in the Finance and City Attorney's offices to comply with state statutes for future delinquent LID assessments.

We believe the above actions will address the current situation and prevent a repetition of this in the future.

Auditor's Concluding Remarks

We will review the status of the city's corrective actions as part of our next audit.

We would like to express our appreciation to the City of Mount Vernon for the courtesies and cooperation extended to us throughout the audit process.

We wish to thank management for their written response and to acknowledge their efforts to correct those areas noted in our finding.

CITY OF MOUNT VERNON
Skagit County, Washington
January 1, 1995 Through December 31, 1995

**Independent Auditor's Report On Financial Statements And Additional
Information**

Mayor
City of Mount Vernon
Mount Vernon, Washington

We have audited the accompanying general-purpose financial statements of the City of Mount Vernon, Skagit County, Washington, as of and for the fiscal year ended December 31, 1995, as listed in the table of contents. These financial statements are the responsibility of the city's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit.

We conducted our audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatements. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the City of Mount Vernon, at December 31, 1995, and the results of its operations and cash flows of its proprietary fund types for the fiscal year then ended, in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.

Our audit was made for the purpose of forming an opinion on the financial statements taken as a whole. The accompanying Schedule of State Financial Assistance listed in the table of contents is presented for purposes of additional analysis and is not a required part of the financial statements. Such information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audit of the financial statements and, in our opinion, is fairly presented in all material respects in relation to the financial statements taken as a whole.

In accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, we have also issued a report dated May 3, 1996, on our consideration of the city's internal control structure and a report dated May 3, 1996, on its compliance with laws and regulations.

Brian Sonntag
State Auditor

May 3, 1996

CITY OF MOUNT VERNON
Skagit County, Washington
January 1, 1995 Through December 31, 1995

Independent Auditor's Report On Supplementary Information
Schedule Of Federal Financial Assistance

Mayor
City of Mount Vernon
Mount Vernon, Washington

We have audited the general-purpose financial statements of the City of Mount Vernon, Skagit County, Washington, as of and for the fiscal year ended December 31, 1995, and have issued our report thereon dated May 3, 1996. These financial statements are the responsibility of the city's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit.

We conducted our audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

Our audit was made for the purpose of forming an opinion on the financial statements of the City of Mount Vernon taken as a whole. The accompanying Schedule of Federal Financial Assistance is presented for purposes of additional analysis and is not a required part of the financial statements. The information in the schedule has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audit of the financial statements and, in our opinion, is fairly presented in all material respects in relation to the financial statements taken as a whole.

Brian Sonntag
State Auditor

May 3, 1996

CITY OF MOUNT VERNON
Skagit County, Washington
January 1, 1995 Through December 31, 1995

**Independent Auditor's Report On Compliance With The General Requirements
Applicable To Federal Financial Assistance Programs**

Mayor
City of Mount Vernon
Mount Vernon, Washington

We have audited the general-purpose financial statements of the City of Mount Vernon, Skagit County, Washington, as of and for the fiscal year ended December 31, 1995, and have issued our report thereon dated May 3, 1996.

We have applied procedures to test the city's compliance with the following requirements applicable to its federal financial assistance programs, which are identified in the Schedule of Federal Financial Assistance, for the fiscal year ended December 31, 1995:

- Political activity
- Civil rights
- Cash management
- Federal financial reports
- Allowable costs/cost principles
- Drug-Free Workplace Act
- Administrative requirements, including subrecipient monitoring

The following requirements were determined to be not applicable to its federal financial assistance programs:

- Davis-Bacon Act
- Relocation assistance and real property acquisition

Our procedures were limited to the applicable procedures described in the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) *Compliance Supplement for Single Audits of State and Local Governments* or alternative procedures. Our procedures were substantially less in scope than an audit, the objective of which is the expression of an opinion on the city's compliance with the requirements listed in the preceding paragraph. Accordingly, we do not express such an opinion.

With respect to the items tested, the results of those procedures disclosed no material instances of noncompliance with the requirements listed in the second paragraph of this report. With respect to items not tested, nothing came to our attention that caused us to believe that the city had not complied, in all material respects, with those requirements.

This report is intended for the information of management and the mayor and to meet our statutory reporting obligations. This report is a matter of public record and its distribution is not limited. It also

serves to disseminate information to the public as a reporting tool to help citizens assess government operations.

Brian Sonntag
State Auditor

May 3, 1996

CITY OF MOUNT VERNON
Skagit County, Washington
January 1, 1995 Through December 31, 1995

Independent Auditor's Report On Compliance With Specific Requirements
Applicable To Nonmajor Federal Financial Assistance Program Transactions

Mayor
City of Mount Vernon
Mount Vernon, Washington

We have audited the general-purpose financial statements of the City of Mount Vernon, Skagit County, Washington, as of and for the fiscal year ended December 31, 1995, and have issued our report thereon dated May 3, 1996.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements of the city and with our consideration of the city's control structure used to administer its federal financial assistance programs, as required by OMB Circular A-128, *Audits of State and Local Governments*, we selected certain transactions applicable to its nonmajor federal financial assistance programs for the fiscal year ended December 31, 1995. As required by OMB Circular A-128, we have performed auditing procedures to test compliance with the requirements governing allowability of the program expenditures that are applicable to those transactions. Our procedures were substantially less in scope than an audit, the objective of which is the expression of an opinion on the city's compliance with these requirements. Accordingly, we do not express such an opinion.

With respect to the items tested, the results of those procedures disclosed no material instances of noncompliance with the requirements listed in the preceding paragraph. With respect to the items not tested, nothing came to our attention that caused us to believe that the City of Mount Vernon had not complied, in all material respects, with those requirements.

This report is intended for the information of management and the mayor and to meet our statutory reporting obligations. This report is a matter of public record and its distribution is not limited. It also serves to disseminate information to the public as a reporting tool to help citizens assess government operations.

Brian Sonntag
State Auditor

May 3, 1996

CITY OF MOUNT VERNON
Skagit County, Washington
January 1, 1995 Through December 31, 1995

**Independent Auditor's Report On Internal Control Structure Used In
Administering Federal Financial Assistance Programs**

Mayor
City of Mount Vernon
Mount Vernon, Washington

We have audited the general-purpose financial statements of the City of Mount Vernon, Skagit County, Washington, as of and for the fiscal year ended December 31, 1995, and have issued our report thereon dated May 3, 1996.

We conducted our audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards, *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States, and the provisions of OMB Circular A-128, *Audits of State and Local Governments*. Those standards and OMB Circular A-128 require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement.

In planning and performing our audit, we considered the city's internal control structure in order to determine our auditing procedures for the purpose of expressing our opinions on the financial statements and to report on the internal control structure in accordance with OMB Circular A-128. This report addresses our consideration of internal control structure policies and procedures relevant to compliance with requirements applicable to federal financial assistance programs. We have addressed internal control structure policies and procedures relevant to our audit of the financial statements in a separate report dated May 3, 1996.

The management of the city is responsible for establishing and maintaining an internal control structure. In fulfilling this responsibility, estimates and judgments by management are required to assess the expected benefits and related costs of internal control structure policies and procedures. The objectives of an internal control structure are to provide management with reasonable, but not absolute, assurance that:

- Assets are safeguarded against loss from unauthorized use or disposition.
- Transactions are executed in accordance with management's authorization and recorded properly to permit the preparation of financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.
- Federal financial assistance programs are managed in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

Because of inherent limitations in any internal control structure, errors, irregularities, or instances of noncompliance may nevertheless occur and not be detected. Also, projection of any evaluation of the structure to future periods is subject to the risk that procedures may become inadequate because of

changes in conditions or that the effectiveness of the design and operation of policies and procedures may deteriorate.

For the purpose of this report, we have classified the significant internal control structure policies and procedures used in administering federal financial assistance programs in the following categories:

- **Accounting Controls**
 - Accounts payable
 - Purchasing and receiving
 - Payroll
- **General Requirements**
 - Political activity
 - Civil rights
 - Cash management
 - Federal financial reports
 - Allowable costs/cost principles
 - Drug-Free Workplace Act
 - Administrative requirements, including subrecipient monitoring
- **Specific Requirements**
 - Types of services
 - Matching, level of effort, earmarking
 - Reporting
- **Claims For Advances And Reimbursements**
- **Amounts Claimed Or Used For Matching**

For all of the applicable internal control structure categories listed above, we obtained an understanding of the design of relevant policies and procedures and determined whether they have been placed in operation, and we assessed control risk.

The following internal control structure categories were determined to be insignificant to federal financial assistance programs:

- **Accounting Controls**
 - Cash receipts
 - Cash disbursements
 - Receivables
 - Inventory control
 - Property, plant, and equipment
 - General ledger
- **General Requirements**
 - Davis-Bacon Act
 - Relocation assistance and real property acquisition
- **Specific Requirements**
 - Eligibility
 - Special requirements

During the fiscal year ended December 31, 1995, the city had no major federal financial assistance programs and expended 53 percent of its total federal financial assistance under the following nonmajor federal financial assistance program: Narcotics Task Force (CFDA 16.579).

We performed tests of controls, as required by OMB Circular A-128, to evaluate the effectiveness of the design and operation of internal control structure policies and procedures that we considered relevant to preventing or detecting material noncompliance with specific requirements, general requirements, and requirements governing claims for advances and reimbursements, and amounts claimed or used for matching that are applicable to the aforementioned nonmajor program. Our procedures were less in scope than would be necessary to render an opinion on these internal control structures policies and procedures. Accordingly, we do not express such an opinion.

Our consideration of the internal control structure policies and procedures used in administering federal financial assistance would not necessarily disclose all matters in the internal control structure that might be material weaknesses under standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. A material weakness is a reportable condition in which the design or operation of one or more of the internal control structure elements does not reduce to a relatively low level the risk that noncompliance with laws and regulations that would be material to a federal financial assistance program may occur and not be detected within a timely period by employees in the normal course of performing their assigned functions. We noted no matters involving the internal control structure and its operation that we consider to be material weaknesses, as defined above.

This report is intended for the information of management and the mayor and to meet our statutory reporting obligations. This report is a matter of public record and its distribution is not limited. It also serves to disseminate information to the public as a reporting tool to help citizens assess government operations.

Brian Sonntag
State Auditor

May 3, 1996